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Chapter III

THE HISTORY OF SOUTH CHINESE TRIBAL MOVEMENTS AND MIGRATIONS

1. Pa and Shu Peoples of Ssu-ch'uan

173 The origins of all the various peoples of China, as with those of all the other nations of the earth, are usually traced back as far as documentary history leads them and from there into the realms first of quasi-history and then into that of mythology. In China, fairly reliable documentary history begins with the Chou Dynasty at about 1122 B.C. Quasi-history takes one back to perhaps before the second thousand years B.C. A great many Chinese historical scholars are willing to accept as historical fact the existence of the so-called Yellow Emperor who is supposed to have become the ruler of the Han-Chinese in B.C. 2697. Moreover, they see historical cross-reference support for many of the circumstances and events of his time. The accounts of such an early period are included here as a partial introduction to the Chinese view of the historical development of the southern peoples and are not presented as facts accepted by the author. These early accounts are important because they figure in the mythological origins of many of the non-Han tribes as well as in the thinking of the Han-Chinese about their relationship with the non-Han tribes people.

174 171 The earliest cultural center of South China appears to be in Ssu-ch'uan (See Photo 8) at a time contemporary with or even preceding the first appearance of Han-Chinese culture in the Yellow River Valley. Eberhard called this the Pa culture, but Hsu Sung-shih equated it with the Shu-shan culture and included Pa in it. What their culture was like cannot be ascertained, said Hsu[1], although some excavations in Ssu-ch'uan give a few meager indications.[2] Eberhard drew certain tentative conclusions about it on the basis of the few documentary facts available.[3] Figures of animals, people, warriors, servants, girls, all types of household articles, reliefs, and glazed grave-bricks showing stilt-houses and leaf or thatched roofs

174 convinced Eickstedt of a definite T'ai cultural tie-up with
171 the ancient Pa and Shu. Ancient writings of the Pa people were discovered on a stone tablet at Sui-ling in Ssu-ch'uan under an uprooted tree. Beautiful decorated clay vessels attributed to the Po-jen tribes have been dug up in western Ssu-ch'uan graves in the richly arranged burial grounds in the vicinity of Sui-fu. The coffins here were set up on steep rocks and pegged down, a type of "burial" observed by the present author in the Pa-yi (T'ai) region of western Yun-nan in 1940.

175 The ancient histories do not term the Pa and Shu peoples the Hsi-nan-i (Southwestern Barbarians) because the latter term derives from the Han period, whereas the state of Pa and Shu were established long before the Han rulers reached the southwest tribes. Nevertheless, said Hsu Sung-shih,[4] the tribes of Pa and Shu were of the same group as those of the Southwest.

The Pa state is supposed to have originated at the same time as the Shu state, that is, prior to B.C. 3000 and the time of the mythical Three Kings. One of the Three Kings was Jen Huang who was said to be one of nine brothers. Jen Huang is reported to have divided up the country into nine provinces of which he occupied the central one, while each of the other brothers occupied an outlying province. (The division into nine divisions probably is related to the feudal land division system of ancient China, where a square of land would be divided by the double crossed-lines of tick-tack-toe, thus making nine equal squares. The middle one would be occupied by the landlord or feudal lord, with the outlying ones occupied by fief-holders.)

One of the nine spheres of government was supposed to be the territory including the two states of Pa and Shu, which were presumably fiefs of Jen Huang (See Photo 6). For long generations the feudal state of Shu was the cock-of-the-walk in southwest China, and its culture is stated to have reached brilliant heights at an early period. The Yellow Emperor is stated to have got for his son, Ch'ang-i, a wife from the Shu-shan Clan, and the first-born of this pair became Emperor K'u (Ti K'u) (B.C. 2435-2365). One of Ch'ang-i's sons also married a Shu-shan wife. Furthermore, the homeland of the great Yü also is said to have been in the territory of the Shu-shan Clan. It is evident that if these were historical facts, the Shu State had very intimate connections with the Yellow River civilization. Its power surpassed that of Pa. Its territory is reported

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To go a step further, the modern Siamese of Thailand are also of the same cultural stock as these people of Pa and Shu.

Hsu pointed to a possible significant connection in the use of the character Chü (in the term "Marquis Chü"), in a so-called Chü-lan Kingdom during the Ch'in and Han periods, and in the name of a city Yang-chü-mi in the Ta-li area of Yun-nan during the Nan-chao Kingdom and the T'ang period. This seems to him to show that possibly the same peoples occupied parts of Ssu-ch'uan, Yun-nan and Kuei-chou during these early periods.[6] This is very hypothetical, of course.

2. Noteworthy Aspects of Shu-shan Culture

Certain noteworthy aspects of Shu-shan culture must claim our attention:

(1) The use of the two characters "shu" and "shan" in "Shu-shan" gives some indication of the nature of the landscape in which the Shu-shan people devised their livelihood and may have a bearing upon their type of land-use. The Shan Hai Ching (ancient classic) says that the original character for "shu" meant "slushy mud". It also says that the state of Shu had three marshy streams termed the "San-shu" or "Three Marshes". It would appear then, that "Shu-shan" means marshes surrounding hills and indicates a low-lying, wet landscape adapted to wet-rice growth and cultivation. This type of landscape is precisely the kind associated with the wet-rice culture of the T'ai ethnic groups throughout history.

(2) A second noteworthy aspect of Shu-shan culture is that it developed the art of silk making. Shu-shan had an early ruler called Ts'an-ts'ung, a name meaning "silkworm grove." The Lu Shih (Lu History) has shown that this was the same as the Ts'an Kingdom or Silkworm State of olden times. Myth also has it that Fu-hsi raised silkworms and mulberry. The Huang-ti Nei-chuan notes that the Yellow Emperor beheaded Chih Yu, and the Silkworm God made him a presentation of silk. The Huang-t'u Yao-chien states that Fu-hsi developed silk, and that the ancestor of the Lei of Hsi-ling encouraged the raising of silkworms. In the site of the old I-shui Hsien, south of present-day Sung-p'an in northwest Ssu-ch'uan, there are some mounds called "the Silkworm Mounds" which appear to correspond with the Hsi-ling ("western tombs") from where the silkworms were reportedly derived.